UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/6 (Prog. 39)
28 July 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997*

MAJOR PROGRAMME IX. COMMON SUPPORT SERVICES

Programme 39. Conference and library services

1. The preparation, format and content of the medium-term plan and its revisions are governed by the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/PPBME Rules/1(1987)).

2. Regulation 3.11 provides, inter alia, that the medium-term plan shall be revised as necessary every two years to incorporate required programme changes and that the proposed revisions shall be as detailed as required to incorporate the programme implications of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the intergovernmental organs or international conferences since the adoption of the plan.

3. The revisions proposed below modify the relevant parts of the narrative of programme 39, Conference and library services, of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/253 of 21 December 1990 and issued in document A/45/6/Rev.1. The revisions do not reflect a fundamental change in the mandate, orientation or strategy of this programme. Rather, at the level of general orientation and overall strategy, they reflect certain changes in the problems and issues facing the Office of Conference Services and incorporate modifications stemming from decisions of the Committee on Conferences, the Advisory

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* After adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, the complete revised medium-term plan will be issued in final printed form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/47/6/Rev.1).

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Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the General Assembly, such as the decision to create a unified interpretation service under United Nations auspices at Vienna. They also reflect organizational changes resulting from the reorganization of the Secretariat, such as the new arrangements for the servicing of the Publications Board. At the subprogramme level, revisions have been made to clarify and update the existing text, in particular with respect to the status of certain technological innovation projects.

4. The following text modifies paragraphs 39.2 to 39.5, 39.7, 39.9, 39.11, 39.12, 39.14, 39.16, 39.22, 39.25, 39.41, 39.44, 39.45 to 39.53, 39.55, 39.56 and 39.60.

A. Major programme

5. Following the restructuring of the Secretariat, it is proposed to merge Major programme IX, Conference services, and Major programme X, Administrative services, into a new Major programme IX, Common support services.

B. Programme

PROGRAMME 39. CONFERENCE AND LIBRARY SERVICES

6. It is proposed to replace "Department of Conference Services" with "Office of Conference Services" throughout the text of this programme.

1. General orientation

Paragraph 39.2 — The second sentence should read:

"The most recent and comprehensive of those resolutions are 37/14 of 16 November 1982, 40/243 of 18 December 1985, 42/207 of 11 December 1987, 43/222 of 21 December 1988, 44/196 of 21 December 1989, 45/238 of 21 December 1990 and 46/190 of 20 December 1991."

Paragraph 39.3 — Replace the paragraph with the following:

"Policies governing the preparation, production, distribution and sale of United Nations documents are determined, and their implementation monitored, by an interdepartmental Publications Board, comprising representatives of author departments and processing services and currently chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, whose Department provides the Board's secretariat. The Chief Editor and Director, Editorial and Official Records Division, Office of Conference Services, serves as

Executive Secretary of the Board and chairs the Working Committee at Headquarters established to assist the Board. Subsidiary bodies of the Publications Board have been established at other duty stations. Under its terms of reference, set out in ST/SGB/Organization, annex I, the Board, inter alia, coordinates planning and supervises implementation of the publications programme and issues directives and regulations on behalf of the Secretary-General on publication policies and practices. The responsibility for the quality and timely submission of materials for processing remains with author departments and offices."

Paragraph 39.4, subparagraph (f)

Replace lines 4 to 7 of the subparagraph with the following:

"publications at the proper time and in proper quantities, to increase the use of the internal reproduction capacity, to minimize the costs and use of external contractual printing, to increase the general awareness of the United Nations through internal and external publications, and to control the execution of the programme."

Paragraph 39.4, subparagraph (g)

Insert a new subparagraph (g) as follows:

"(g) To ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the libraries of the United Nations as a network of cooperating information centres within a wider framework of cooperation with the libraries of other organizations of the system supporting delegates, missions, Secretariat staff members and researchers from outside, in their needs for documentary and factual information."

Paragraph 39.5

Replace the second, third and fourth sentences with the following:

"On the one hand, the changes mandated in the meetings pattern of the Economic and Social Council pursuant to recommendation 8 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations 1/ were designed to reduce long-term conference servicing requirements, although whether in fact they will do so is as yet uncertain. On the other hand, the enhanced role of the Organization in the maintenance of international peace and security has already generated an expansion of the activity of the Security Council and its subsidiary organs. At the same time, the trend towards

greater multilateral cooperation in a wide range of economic, social, environmental and legal fields has begun to lead to increases in the number of meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations, including special conferences with the participation of all Member States, often at very senior levels. These developments will have implications for the demand for conference services during the remainder of the medium-term plan period."

Paragraph 39.7 — Replace the first sentence with the following:

"An important issue of continuing concern is that of making the most efficient use of scarce resources, including working towards the optimum combination of established posts and temporary assistance."

2. Overall strategy

Paragraph 39.9 — Line 3 should read "Assistant Secretary-General for Conference Services. Within".

Replace the fifth to eighth sentences with the following:

"Under an agreement with IAEA effective 1 January 1992, the United Nations has assumed responsibility for the provision of interpretation services to IAEA as well as to other Vienna-based organizations. It is anticipated that, by the end of the medium-term plan period, the United Nations will have assumed full responsibility for all conference services for United Nations bodies meeting at Vienna; the extent to which conference services will be provided to UNIDO by the United Nations remains a matter for consideration by the intergovernmental policy-making bodies of the two organizations, but final arrangements for such services are expected to be reflected in the programme budgets for 1994-1995 for both organizations. During the medium-term plan period conference-servicing facilities at other duty stations, under the auspices of the regional commissions, UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), will be strengthened, including through physical construction projects, the application of technological innovations, the provision of additional equipment and staff development activities; telecommunications linkages between all conference centres will also be enhanced."

Paragraph 39.11 Replace the paragraph with the following:

"In order to address those issues, the programme will continue to place considerable emphasis upon the application of technological innovations in every aspect of its activities. In the previous medium-term plan period, attention concentrated upon the introduction of word-processing capacities in all official languages and the establishment of a computer-based Document Records, Information and Tracking System (DRITS). During the 1992-1997 period, the further development and refinement of DRITS will include its globalization, with a view to Secretariat-wide control of documentation and improved Secretariat-wide use of resources and facilities. During the same period, the focus will be on a phased shift from hard-copy to electronic form for the submission, processing, storage and distribution of documents. Increased use will be made of the United Nations telecommunications network linking Headquarters, the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, the regional commissions and other duty stations. It is anticipated that the optical disk system, implemented pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/201, will be gradually expanded from its initial configuration covering New York and Geneva to include Vienna, the regional commissions and other duty stations, so that the full text, stored in electronic form, of all parliamentary documents in the six official languages will be retrievable worldwide. Access to the optical disk text bank will be made available to an expanding range of external users, such as missions of Member States, Governments, libraries and research centres, through on-line telecommunications links or dissemination in CD-ROM (compact disk read-only memory) format. The implementation of machine-assisted document processing will be pursued as required by the above-mentioned shift from hard-copy to electronic documents and to the extent permitted by technological developments, which will be monitored through the implementation of pilot projects. The first steps will be the in-house implementation of computerized reference and terminology databases in all official languages, the expansion of access to external terminology databases and the linkage of databases to translators' workstations. Greater use will also be made of electronic publishing techniques to improve the quality of United Nations documents and publications and to reduce the time and expenditure required for their production. Methods of dissemination of documents and publications produced by the Organization are likely to expand into new forms, with greater use made of videocassettes, CD-ROM, optical disk

technology and other forms of "electronic publications". Despite the inconclusive results of pilot projects in teleconferencing in the 1970s, subsequent developments in this area, including the recent favourable experience of ITU, warrant further study and analysis during the period to assess the suitability of the technique to the nature and conditions of United Nations meetings and conferences."

Paragraph 39.12 — In line 3, after "documentation" insert "and publication".

Paragraph 39.14 — Replace the paragraph with the following:

"Efficient provision of conference and library services worldwide clearly requires effective coordination between the various organizational units responsible for such services at different duty stations, all the more so with recent advances in communications and other technologies. In this context, and as noted above, the Office of Conference Services is given overall responsibility for establishing policies, procedures and practices for, and coordinating the provision of, conference services in the Secretariat. In addition, the Office provides the secretariat of the Committee on Conferences, which advises the General Assembly on all matters relating to the organization of conferences in the United Nations. In a similar vein, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at Headquarters is responsible for coordination of library policies, including the introduction of technical innovations, with United Nations libraries away from Headquarters and cooperates with them on projects and activities of mutual interest. In addition to author departments and offices, conference-servicing units must also cooperate closely with substantive and technical secretariats of the various intergovernmental bodies serviced. The application of technological innovations within the Office of Conference Services is carried out within the framework of Secretariat-wide policies and programmes established by the strengthened interdepartmental Technological Innovations Board; representatives of the Office will continue to participate actively in the work of the Board, its Working Committee and other subsidiary bodies. The Office will also continue its close cooperation with the Office of General Services, which is responsible for planning and implementing projects relating to telecommunications and technological innovations for the Organization, for providing overall policy and technical guidelines in matters relating to computers, office equipment and telecommunications and for enforcing standards set by the Technological Innovations Board. Successful implementation of the proposed programme of

technological innovations and other improvements and the continued enhancement of the skills of language staff will also depend upon a comprehensive training programme for staff at all levels, to be planned and implemented in close cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management."

Paragraph 39.16 Replace the paragraph with the following:

"Cooperation with intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations and enterprises outside the United Nations system, such as the various institutions of the European Communities, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Federal Translation Bureau of Canada, the International Organization for Standardization, and a range of academic bodies, professional institutions and commercial firms offering computerized databases, will be expanded, particularly in such areas as on-line databases and external publishing and publishing in electronic or other alternative formats.

C. Subprogrammes

SUBPROGRAMME 1. EDITORIAL AND OFFICIAL RECORDS

Paragraph 39.22 Replace the first sentence with the following:

"By the end of 1991, the computer-based Document Records, Information and Tracking System (DRITS) had become fully operational at Headquarters and was under implementation at Geneva, linking all units responsible for the processing of documents and publications, as well as linking other selected editorial units and author departments at Headquarters."

Paragraph 39.25 Replace the first sentence with the following:

"The quality of parliamentary documentation and other publications is also expected to be improved through the establishment of the full-text transmission network."

SUBPROGRAMME 3. TRANSLATION SERVICES

Paragraph 39.41 The last phrase should read "pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3355 (XXIX) of 18 December 1974".

Paragraph 39.44 Replace the second and subsequent sentences with the following:

"By the end of 1991, the computer equipment base in the translation sector was still limited, both in absolute terms and in comparison with the rest of the Secretariat. Because of the lack of a local area network, pending the implementation of a Secretariat-wide cabling plan, it was not possible to maximize the usefulness of existing workstations. In the area of terminology, the mainframe-based Terminology Information and Bulletin Production System had been enhanced to allow computer-assisted production of hard-copy bulletins in all six official languages. Further development is required on an on-line access system in all six official languages, with a possible subsystem for German, which will print and display terminology data at all local and remote PC workstations. At the same time, further development of the Reference Information System will permit its incorporation into the planned Integrated Reference and Terminology Information System. The design work required for the initial phase of implementation of the optical disk system to be established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/201 for storage and remote and local retrieval of all parliamentary documentation has been completed; the specifications of the system, notably in the areas of document indexing and reprocessing capability, take fully into account the requirements of translators, who are expected to be major users of the system in view of their constant need to access and retrieve reference material. The computer-based Document Records, Information and Tracking System (DRITS) has become fully operational and proved to be a useful aid for the programming of translation assignments as well as a source of more accurate statistical data. It is intended to upgrade the system in order to accelerate the processing of queries and preparation of reports. The second phase of DRITS should facilitate in-service record-keeping and job-flow management."

Paragraph 39.45 — Replace the first sentence with the following:

"The introduction of machine-assisted translation, which will be contingent on the installation of networked PC workstations for translators and on the development of electronic resources, is expected to have significant effects on the method of work in the translation area, as well as in other areas of the production of documentation, both upstream and downstream, with the following results:"

Paragraph 39.46 — Replace the paragraph with the following:

"39.46 The strategy for pursuing those objectives includes the following:

"(a) PC workstations will be installed and networked in a phased manner throughout translation and supporting services, with facilities for electronic document transmission, retrieval of documents stored in the optical disk text bank and retrieval of terminology data;

"(b) Pilot projects will be developed in New York and Geneva with a view to developing translation tools appropriate to each language;

"(c) Special emphasis will be placed on terminology services, with due regard to the parity of treatment of the official languages. Through a major system improvement, terminology and reference databases will be expanded in all official languages and made available to a wider range of users;

"(d) All translation staff will have access, through a network, to the required database systems;

"(e) Greater reliance will be placed on contractual translation, which has proven to be cost-effective. This will ease the strain on the translation services and help them to meet deadlines for parliamentary documentation. The Contractual Translation Unit will be equipped for communication with contractors, who would thus have remote access to relevant terminology and reference databases;

"(f) Special training programmes will be developed by the training services in close cooperation with the translation services and the technological innovations services with a view to training permanent and temporary translation staff in the use of the machines that will be made available to them; continuation of the special language training programme for translators initiated in 1988 by the Training Service/OHRM will enable the Division to fulfil its responsibilities concerning the parity of the official languages of the Organization."

SUBPROGRAMME 4. PUBLISHING SERVICES

Paragraphs 39.47-39.53 — Replace the paragraphs with the following:

"39.47 Under the general mandates outlined in paragraphs 39.1 to 39.3 above, this subprogramme deals with printing documents as well as approved titles in the publications programme and arranging all stages of

production and distribution (see also Programme 44, Subprogramme 3) necessary for such documents and publications. All areas in the subprogramme, that is, manuscripts preparation, typesetting, copy preparation, proofreading, graphic and cartographic services, internal and external printing, storage and distribution, have been affected by far-reaching technological advances and an increased popular demand for published material from and about the United Nations. The challenge facing the subprogramme will be to harness these technological improvements as coherently as possible to improve the quality and timeliness of the materials produced while minimizing the cost of operations and distribute materials to an ever wider readership.

"39.48 Thus the aim of the subprogramme is to build and manage a modern and unified publishing operation; a subsidiary aim of the subprogramme is to introduce new technology so as to achieve the most rational and cost-effective use of staff and equipment for all the various stages of this operation.

"39.49 During the plan period, to achieve a more cohesive publishing operation, the following activities are planned:

"(a) To provide more easily recognizable and accessible United Nations published materials targeted to clearly identified readerships, through direct publishing by the United Nations, co-publishing with external publishing houses and working with book producers;

"(b) To encourage external publication of United Nations material when doing so offers additional benefits in terms of wider readership and/or increased revenues; to improve the appearance of publications by introducing a cohesive and consistent graphics design that will establish a strong visual identity for all United Nations material;

"(c) To develop and monitor design and layout standards for desktop publishing projects produced by author departments and other United Nations bodies;

"(d) To improve the efficiency and timeliness of operations by computerizing all record-keeping functions at Headquarters and by establishing linkages both upstream and downstream for the tracking of jobs, sources of supply and invoices, as well as budgetary monitoring.

Appropriate modernization will also be pursued at other duty stations;

"(e) To integrate the preparation of maps with the electronic publishing and data transmission networks of the Organization through the introduction of desktop mapping. Such capabilities will also permit the integration of statistical and demographic data, thereby providing the various sectors of the Organization with prompt and up-to-date carto-geographic information;

"(f) To improve efficiency and timeliness in the reproduction area through computerized automation of the pre-press area at Headquarters and introduce digital transmission of data to and from the Reproduction Section. Appropriate modernization will also be pursued at other duty stations;

"(g) To upgrade the distribution system, and to further enhance electronic distribution services derived from the optical disk data bank, inter alia, through existing Integrated Services Digital Networks (ISDN) and other high-speed data transfer systems;

"(h) To promote the accurate and rapid identification of documents and publications through development of a system of bar codes;

"(i) To follow up with readers on the effectiveness of the publications.

"39.50 Under the authority of the Publications Board, publishing policies will continue to be systematically reviewed and amended as necessary, thereby reflecting developments in the publishing field as well as in the Organization's publishing activities. Particular attention will be paid to making the publishing programme more effective in attracting as wide a readership as possible and reviewing the impact of publications. Recent policy changes allowing the use of book producers will be pursued, as will co-publishing and external publishing means.

"39.51 The use of electronic publishing techniques will continue, thereby reducing reliance on external typesetting and increasing the efficiency and economy of the internal reproduction process. Official Records and United Nations publications will be produced directly from electronic data already corrected on word-processor

terminals at the editorial stage. Automated insertion of typesetting specifications will generate output in camera-ready format."

"39.52 The standard-setting and monitoring activities governing the preparation and production of the electronic publishing projects will include:

"(a) Development of appropriate design layout and guidelines to ensure adherence to high professional standards by users of desktop publishing devices throughout the Organization;

"(b) The extension of the established style and editorial standards (as provided by the United Nations Editorial Manual) to cover the desktop publishing produced by author departments.

"39.53 An integrated electronic database approach to printing procurement, costing and planning will be developed at Headquarters, utilizing computer workstations for the preparation of purchase orders, the payment of invoices and the tracking of works in progress. Greater use will be made at Geneva of a computerized reporting and invoices control system, installed to diagnose operating inefficiencies and provide management with cost information for decision-making purposes. Suitable measures for modernization in this area will also be pursued at other duty stations."

Paragraphs 39.55 and 39.56

Replace the paragraphs with the following:

"39.55 In the area of reproduction, text and images will be transmitted electronically from the typing pools to the Reproduction Section via cable for processing by computer stations in that form. Thus linked to the existing automated projection plate-making device, the system will constitute a fully integrated computer-to-press operation. Automating present equipment will reduce manual handling in reproduction processes and improve both efficiency and productivity. Linkage of DRITS to the internal reproduction system will permit a more rational use of equipment and staff resources, ensuring the timely issuance of documentation in a more cost-effective manner. The introduction of optical disk technology is likely to have a strong impact on the reproduction operation. The Composition Unit at Geneva, utilizing electronic publishing techniques installed in 1990, will offer increased services of computerized image scanning,

as well as special graphics for tables and charts. In addition, electronic transmission of text already implemented in that Unit will be expanded to receive electronic images from the Text Processing Section. Print runs will be reduced through the introduction of printing on demand by installing high-speed printers connected directly to the optical disk system. Appropriate measures will also be taken to pursue modernization of reproduction facilities at other duty stations.

"39.56 Information generated by the computerized inventory and stock control system at Headquarters will provide managerial data that, when analysed, will provide exact patterns of movement, utilization and distribution of the range of documents and publications produced. Computer terminals should be installed at the delegation and Secretariat distribution stations, integrally linked to both the DRITS and the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS). It is anticipated that electronic distribution will supplement to a greater degree the current manual distribution of documents in hard copy through access to a new document-servicing centre based on optical disk technology. Use of compact shelving and other space-saving means will be pursued as well. In Geneva, a computerized, automated conveyer-belt type of distribution machine will be installed to speed up the distribution of paper documents and publications. The United Nations Office at Geneva will modernize and streamline its postal operation, with the introduction of bar coding and computerized sorting equipment, and intends to resume negotiations with the Swiss postal authorities with the aim of broadening the scope of the beneficial rates previously contracted for this duty station, in view of the economies that all departments have derived from such special rates. Possibilities for modernization of distribution operations at other duty stations will be explored."

SUBPROGRAMME 5. LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES

Paragraph 39.60, subparagraph (h)

Replace the first and second sentences of the subparagraph with the following:

"Dedicated systems for integrated management and information for the United Nations libraries will be installed and implemented. They will be based on commercially available software and dedicated minicomputers at Headquarters and at Geneva, with batch transfer of the cataloguing and indexing data of the Geneva library to Headquarters."